

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 731

By Green

A RESOLUTION recognizing and applauding Heath Calhoun of Clarksville upon winning the silver medal in the Super Combined Sit-Skiing event at the 2014 Paralympics.

WHEREAS, every four years, people the world over pause to witness and celebrate the achievements of the world's finest winter sports athletes as they compete against one another and, in doing so, exhibit some of humanity's finest qualities during the Olympic and Paralympic Games; and

WHEREAS, the 2014 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games were held in Sochi, Russia, and it was there that Heath Calhoun, a competitor in a number of downhill skiing events in the Winter Paralympics, won the silver medal in the Super Combined Sit-Skiing event; and

WHEREAS, a native of Bristol and a current resident of Clarksville, Heath Calhoun served with valor and honor as a Squad Leader in the 101st Airborne Division, United States Army. While deployed in Iraq in 2003, he sustained grievous injuries to both legs, injuries that required the amputation of both legs above the knee, when his Humvee was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade; and

WHEREAS, as a younger man, Mr. Calhoun attended Grundy Senior High School, graduating in 1997. He then attended Southwest Virginia Community College, from which he earned an associate's degree in 1999, after which he enlisted in the United States Army, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, who fought in Vietnam and in World War II, respectively; and

WHEREAS, Heath Calhoun was first stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, where he completed infantry, airborne, and Ranger training. He was then given his active duty assignment to serve as a Squad Leader in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, following the attack on his Humvee, Mr. Calhoun underwent nine months of rehabilitation and recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, during which time he attempted to utilize several different sets of prosthetics. All attempts were unsuccessful, and Mr. Calhoun relied on the use of a wheelchair for mobility until 2006, when Hanger Prosthetics was able to provide him with prosthetic legs that use computerized knees; and

WHEREAS, while recuperating at Walter Reed, Heath Calhoun became involved with the Wounded Warrior Project, and he has since dedicated a great deal of his time and energies to helping other injured veterans, traveling across the country, sharing his story, and offering support to those in need; and

WHEREAS, he is a tireless advocate for meeting the needs of the wounded soldier, and he played a large part in the passage of the Wounded Warrior Bill in 2005. The landmark legislation financially assists wounded soldiers and their families during the weeks, months, and sometimes years of their grueling rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, his dedication to serving the needs of his fellow wounded veterans also led Mr. Calhoun to become an Amputee Coalition of America certified peer visitor, in which role he makes himself available to others who have lost limbs, providing emotional and informational support; and

WHEREAS, during his time at Walter Reed, Heath Calhoun was introduced to the world of adaptive sports, and he became an immediate enthusiast. He excels at many different adaptive sports, especially skiing, which he attempted for the first time at a Winter Sports Clinic in Aspen, Colorado, just five months after his injury; and

WHEREAS, in the spring of 2005, Mr. Calhoun, along with another wounded service member and an able-bodied individual, cycled from Los Angeles, California, to Montauk, New York. He pedaled his hand-cycle for 4,200 miles, traversing the United States and raising money and awareness for other wounded service members, a feat documented by Showtime in *Home Front*; and

WHEREAS, while attending an Amputee Coalition of America conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in June of 2005, Mr. Calhoun met Kevin Carroll, Vice President of Prosthetics of Hangar Prosthetics. Mr. Carroll encouraged Heath to once again attempt the use of prosthetic legs, this time using Hangar's specialized prosthetics that utilize computerized knees; and

WHEREAS, the attempt was successful, to say the least, and Heath Calhoun has not used a wheelchair since July 5, 2006. The prosthetics have allowed Mr. Calhoun to engage in many activities, including a number of athletic challenges. He competes as part of a three-man team in the Challenged Athletes Triathlon in La Jolla, California, regularly plays in the National Amputee Golf Association national tournament, has competed in the sprinting races in the Endeavor Games for Athletes with Physical Disabilities, and has become one of the country's finest downhill skiers; and

WHEREAS, he competed in the 2009 U.S. Adaptive Alpine National Championships, in which he took second place in the Sit-Ski slalom and first place in the Sit-Ski Super G, and was chosen to compete as a member of the U.S. alpine skiing team at the 2010 Winter Paralympics, where he served as Team USA's flag-bearer. He also won the silver medal in the downhill event at the U.S. Paralympics Alpine Skiing National Championships in 2012; and

WHEREAS, in the most recent Winter Paralympics in Sochi, Heath captured the silver medal in the Super Combined Sit-Skiing event and finished just off the podium in the slalom and Super G events; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Heath Calhoun was awarded the Challenge Aspen Inspiration Award at the Winter Sports Clinic, was honored with the Wounded Warrior Project's George C. Lang Award for Courage, and was featured in the documentary short film *The Fall Line*; NASCAR dedicated the 2010 spring race at Richmond International Speedway in his honor, and he was joined by his family and friends to witness the running of the Heath Calhoun 400; and

WHEREAS, Heath Calhoun embodies the finest aspects of sportsmanship and dedication to excellence in all endeavors, living the examined life with courage and conviction,

and it is wholly fitting that he be recognized by this body for his contributions to the world of adaptive sports and his tireless advocacy for wounded veterans; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby commend and congratulate Heath Calhoun for his silver-medal finish in the Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi, applauding his commitment to serving the needs of others and recognizing him as one of Tennessee's finest citizens.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we extend to Mr. Calhoun our best wishes for his continued success in all future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.